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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NDJAMENA 000494

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/C AND AF/RSA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [MARR](#) [UN](#) [SU](#) [LY](#) [FR](#) [ASEC](#) [CD](#)
SUBJECT: FRENCH SEE RESPITE FROM EARLY REBEL ASSAULT,
AS CHAD MILITARY IMPROVES AND REBELS IN RELATIVE
DISARRAY

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CLASSIFIED BY AMB LOUIS J. NIGRO, JR. FOR REASONS
1.4(B) AND (D).

REF: (A) NDJAMENA 491, (B) NDJAMENA 396

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) The French here doubt that Chad rebels, discouraged and disunited, will attack in force before the New Year, and believe that of the rebel formations, only the Ouaddaian UFCD group led by Hassabalah was stronger than in February. Intra-Chadian diplomacy had undermined the Erdimi's Zaghawa-based RFC, and seemed to be having similar success with Hassabalah's UFCD, with the Prime Minister, himself of Ouaddaian origin, active in this effort. The French also see the Chadian military as stronger and more confident than in February, and believe that senior Chad military benefited from recent French training aimed at enabling them to utilize their newly-acquired vehicles, weapons and other platforms more effectively in the field. The French noted, however, that President Deby's recent emphasis on military reform and "nationalization" of the Presidential Guard, although politically wise, might weaken the Chad military's ability to fight in the short term. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Ambassador hosted French Ambassador Bruno Foucher, and his POLMIL and POL Officers at a working lunch October 25. Acting DCM and Acting DATT also attended.

CHAD, SUDAN, AND THE REBELLION

¶3. (C) Foucher said that he believed that the Chad rebels based in Sudan would not attack Chad in force early in the upcoming dry season. Foucher said that the rebels were discouraged and disunited. Their internal correlation of forces had change since the near-successful assault on N'Djamena last February: Only the Ouaddaian UFCD group led by Hassabalah was stronger than it had been in February. The forces led by Timane Erdimi (Zaghawa, RFC) and Mahamat Nouri (Gorane, UFDD), and Subiane (Arab, FRS) of Soubiane were less numerous than before. Intra-Chadian diplomacy had been successful in undermining Erdimi and the Zaghawa RFC, and seemed to be having success

with Hassabalah's UFCD, as Prime Minister Yousouff Saleh Abbas, himself of Ouaddaian origin, has active in trying to bring the Ouaddaians back into the GOC fold, as happened when Ouaddaian and Tama rebels led by Mahamat Nour came back to Chad in December 2006. Foucher said that he doubted the rebels would mount a sustained campaign until after the New Year.

14. (C) Foucher said that at that point, another contingency would come into play. Foucher said that the bringing of charges by the ICC against Sudanese President Bashir was "ineluctable." Whenever that occurred, the Sudanese reaction would be "imprevisible." The GOS could react by driving the Chad rebels to attack Chad, but it might also act against UNAMID in Darfur, or even, Foucher surmised, marginalize Bashir himself. In any case, once the ICC had acted, the situation between Chad and Sudan would be subject to that new condition.

CHAD MILITARY IMPROVING

15. (C) Foucher said that the Chad military had improved its capabilities greatly since last campaigning season. It had bought great quantities of new equipment, weapons, and vehicles, especially air assets, both fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft. Of particular note were the Sukhoi-25 attack aircraft recently added to the ANT's arsenal. Foucher said that the French military had recently conducted training for Chadian senior military officers, emphasizing the use of maneuver tactics to exploit the advantages in mobility that their new equipment gave

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them. Foucher said the French believed that their Chadian colleagues had gotten the message inherent in this training. Foucher noted that the Chad military had performed much better in June than in February, primarily by employing more effective tactical maneuvering in June than before, which led to important victories, especially at Am Zoer, which resulted in driving the rebels driven out of Chad with heavy losses.

16. (C) Foucher said that President Deby had been "nationalizing" the DGSSIE, the Presidential Guard, that had been heavily Zaghawa, trying to make the ANT more representative of the Chadian people. This was good politics, but might result in military weakness in the short run. This was part of a larger effort to professionalize the Chadian army. Current Defense Minister Kamougue came to the cabinet claiming that President Deby had authorize him to carry out a thorough-going reform of Chad's military institutions, Foucher noted. Foucher was not very sure of Deby's motivation for recently naming his nephew, General Abderahim Bahar Mahamat Itno, Chief of Joint Staff, but it was clear that the new CHOD was a "warrior" and an accomplished "troop leader," who had personally led the armored charge that had repulsed the rebels from N'Djamena in February.

MINURCAT/MINURCAT

17. (C) Foucher said that the GOF was anxious to work with us on a new mandate for a reinforced MINURCAT II. Foucher said that there were strong indications that UNDPKO in New York does not understand the needs of a reinforced MINURCAT as well as the SRSG does. Foucher said it would be important to help the SRSG convince New York that his vision of a MINURCAT II mandated and

staffed to provide a "flexible response" (i.e., through a mix of police trainers, formed police units of gendarme character, and military forces) is the right way to go in Chad.

FRENCH INITIATIVE ON IDPS

¶8. (C) Foucher described the French initiative to make return to homes as attractive as possible to IDPs, a EURO 105 million program signed between France and the GOC last week. Foucher said that France sought to focus attention and resources on one of the eventual "end-states" of the humanitarian crisis in Eastern Chad, the return of IDPs to their homes, farms, and herds.

COMMENT

¶9. (C) The French analysis of Chad rebels tracks with what we know, especially from Embassy Khartoum's superb reporting on its conversations with Chad rebel leaders, and from A/DAS Wycoff's recent telephonic conversation with a UFCD chief who broached the subject of the UFCD entering into negotiations with the GOC along the lines of the Sirte Accord. We see naming of new CHOD and key senior staff as attempt to synchronize the "official" military hierarchy with those leaders who actually lead troops into battle. We agree that the SRSG's vision for a reinforced MINURCAT II endowed with police trainers, formed police (gendarme) units, and appropriate military forces, will be most effective in Chad. END COMMENT.

¶10. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.

NIGRO